

THE BISHOP OF CARLISLE'S.

S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE

THE LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL.

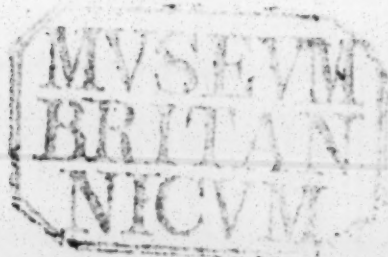
JANUARY 30, 1771.

Die Jovis, 31^o Januarii, 1771.

ORDERED, by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal
in Parliament assembled, that the thanks of this House
be, and are hereby given to the Lord Bishop of CAR-
LISLE for the Sermon by him preached before this House
Yesterday in the Abby Church *Westminster*.— And he is
hereby desired to cause the same to be forthwith printed
and published.

ASHLEY COWPER,

Cler. Parliamentor.



12 F. m^l
The Grounds of a Particular Providence, *19*

A
S E R M O N
PREACHED BEFORE
THE
LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL,
IN THE ABBY CHURCH
WESTMINSTER,
ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY, XXX.

MDCCLXXI.

BY
Law
EDMUND LORD BISHOP OF CARLISLE.

L O N D O N,
PRINTED FOR J. ROBSON BOOKSELLER NEW BOND STREET.

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THE OBITUARY

OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

AND IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

FOR THE YEAR 1880

BY

W. Y.

JOHN B. ALLEN, OF NEW YORK

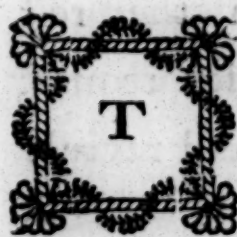
NEW YORK

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DANIEL ii. part of the 20th and 21st verses.

BLESSED BE THE NAME OF GOD FOR EVER AND
EVER; FOR WISDOM AND MIGHT ARE HIS: HE
CHANGETH THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS; HE
REMOVETH KINGS, AND SETTETH UP KINGS.



THESE words are part of the prophet *Daniel's*
thanksgiving to God for a very extraordinary
favour granted to himself and his three friends
on their united prayers. The occasion was this.

Nebuchadnezzar king of *Babylon*, solicitous to know what
would become of his kingdom after him, had a surprising
dream, which made so deep an impression that it con-
tinued "to trouble his spirit", when the substance of it was
forgot. In order to be satisfied about the subject of his late

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anxiety,

anxiety, he summons all his magicians and astrologers, who pretended to foretel future events, and commands them, upon pain of death, to shew him both the dream itself, and the interpretation of it. On their excusing themselves from the former part of his demand, as being what “no
“ man on earth could perform, no king, lord or ruler
“ ever did require,” he condemns them to be cut to pieces; among whom *Daniel* also and his fellows were sought for, to be slain. To prevent the sudden execution of this sentence *Daniel* goes in unto the king, promising, if he would give him time, to explain the whole* : and in the next place, calls on his companions to join with him in
“ desiring mercies of the God of Heaven concerning this
“ secret, that they should not perish with the rest
“ of the wise men of *Babylon* †”. To which request God is pleased to give an immediate answer, and reveals this great secret in a night-vision to *Daniel*‡. Who, thereupon, in the words of my text, grounds a general acknowledgment of God’s infinite wisdom and power, by which he governs the whole world and the kingdoms in it, and directs the several periods and revolutions of it, so as to make all things work together for the good of his creatures

* V. 16.

† V. 17, 18.

‡ V. 19.

tures and his own glory. "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever, for wisdom and might are his", i. e. (according to that emphatical phrase in the original) inhere in, and are derived from him alone: "He changeth the times and the seasons," or rather, directs the seasonable times and opportunities of action; "he removeth kings and setteth up kings," he putteth down one government, and raiseth up another. Thus his wisdom and might appear in ordering the most important, critical affairs in this world; effecting them, does not more demonstrate the greatness of his power, than the manner of disposing them, does the extent of his wisdom; of both which, this dream of *Nebuchadnezzar*, then revealed to *Daniel*, was a very remarkable instance, pointing out a succession of the four great monarchies under which God's people should be sometime subject, and which were to prepare the world for the everlasting kingdom of his *Christ*.

Thus much seem'd necessary to explain the design and import of the words before us; which contain a clear proof of what we usually mean by a *particular providence* inspecting and over-ruling the affairs of mankind; the truth

truth of which doctrine I shall endeavour to illustrate, and apply to the occasion of this day's solemnity.

That the infinite wisdom and almighty power of God have constantly been exercised upon this world and the creatures in it ; that there is a *general* providence presiding over and preserving the whole, has commonly been allowed by the sober part of mankind, and defended by such as call themselves Christians: But farther, that this divine efficiency extends to the particular thoughts and wills of men, that it influences all their actions and affairs, is not so readily granted. And though this point may seem an evident consequence of the former, yet it has been judged by some very serious persons to be incapable of proof, by others void of probability.

They object that nothing like this appears in fact, and that it does not seem necessary to be supposed. It has been, say they, the just observation of the wisest of men, that in the *moral* world “ all things come alike to all, and there “ is one event to the clean and to the unclean, to him that “ sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not.” So that “ no “ man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before “ him,”

“ him.” Nay we see the righteous often persecuted for their very righteousness sake, and the wicked triumphing in and by their wickedness ; and hence infer that success or disappointment in worldly affairs is a very dangerous rule to judge of others by ; and nothing more uncertain than to form a notion of our own state in the divine favour or displeasure from the lot that may befall us in this life.

As to the *natural* world, that seems to be subjected to certain regular laws, impress'd upon all matter at its first formation, and never to be alter'd but upon some most extraordinary account, requiring the manifestation of God himself, and a solemn appeal to the senses of men ; which is what we properly style a *miracle* ; and which was not to be expected after the last revelation made by our Saviour and his apostles, had been sufficiently promulged and establish'd in the world. With regard to the sudden changes and surprising revolutions of *government*, though the vulgar, ignorant of the various grounds of action, generally ascribe them, as they do every thing they cannot account for, to the immediate hand of God ; yet in these do the same secondary causes universally preside ; men being left

here to the guidance of their own reason, in the use of the fittest means of promoting their fortunes, as well as of preserving their lives.

On all which accounts it is concluded to be neither matter of fact, that God does, nor of necessity that he should, ever immediately influence the affairs of mankind in this present world.

Having thus fully stated the objections against a particular providence, in the remaining part of this discourse, I shall endeavour to answer them, by shewing the reasonableness and the necessity of such a providence; and proving its existence both from the Old and New Testament.

First, let us consider how God may be conceived to influence the *natural* and *moral* world; and secondly, why we ought to believe that he does influence them both.

As to the former system, it is plain that he may foresee the effects that flow from any combination of those powers and properties of matter and motion which he himself at first established, and with the same ease govern all their laws,
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which still depend upon him for their operation. He may secretly assist or impede, quicken or retard that operation, wholly, or in any part ; as well as visibly suspend and stop it. As to the latter, he must as certainly know the several springs which actuate the human mind, and see their workings in each situation ; since that is also settled, and these equally sustained by him. Nor can he be less able to incline the thoughts of men, and influence their wills and actions, by suggesting the proper motives, and setting them in a proper light ; by holding some in view, or by diverting and withdrawing others. All this, I say, God must be allowed to know and do, since we are in a great measure capable of it ourselves : and somewhat more than this, somewhat above our reach, may surely be conceived to lie within his power ; namely, the strengthening or impairing such of our faculties themselves as are employ'd in the perception, judgment, or remembrance of these notices ; the heightening or abating of their force upon the passions ; and the like. By these means may he move and turn the hearts of men consistently with the original powers that he has given them, and thereby bring about considerable alterations in that part of the world which more immediately depends upon them. And secondly, that he
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must in some such method interpose, and act upon both parts of the world, the special ends of his government require, and all the duties which are enjoin'd us with respect to him, evidently imply. For were the one of these left wholly to itself, it could not possibly comport with, or be conformed to the other. Were the laws of nature absolutely fix'd and unalterable, they could not suit the varying tempers, nor supply the several exigencies, nor in any respect answer the different merits and demerits of free rational agents. They would not be sufficient to withstand the violence of reigning vice and impiety, nor able to secure the interests of oppressed virtue, or uphold the establishment of true religion in the world. And what room would there be left for the particular duties of faith, hope, and trust in God; for obedience and submission to his holy will; for either dreading his justice, or loving and rejoicing in his mercy; for offering up our prayers or praises;—in short, for any kind of duty and devotion towards him,—unless we really believe that he has the disposal of events, and that he will direct them for our benefit? And though indeed God has been pleased not to appoint an equal distribution of good and evil, an exact discrimination between the just and unjust here (which is
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all that the wise man intended by his observation) - which was neither necessary for, nor well consistent with a time of trial, such as ours manifestly is; and which would have deprived us of our chief argument for a future state: yet on the other hand, there are as good reasons why he should not let every thing go at random, or continue absolutely and unalterably fixed, in this present world, and thereby leave no manner of distinction between the *righteous* and the *wicked*, between him that serveth God, and him that only serveth himself. For as the other procedure would prevent the exercise of most virtues, by leaving them no opportunities; so this would destroy the very existence of them all, by withdrawing their supports. If the consequences of a long course, whether of vice or virtue, were to all appearance equal and indifferent; or if a wicked world were permitted always to triumph in its wickedness, and none but the villain prospered; what would encourage or enable any one to persevere in his integrity, to persist in that which proved at once so unprofitable and unpleasant to him, and not rather resign all to chance or fate? Who would not be forced either to run along with the multitude, or to lie down alone in despair? If every thing went on in an uninterrupted course, and all endea-

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vours to withstand the torrent of iniquity proved as vain as an attempt to stop the tide, or stay the moon, who would not be tempted to imagine that blind necessity, or some weak and capricious principle presided in the world, rather than an infinitely wise and all powerful God?

Farther, publick and national crimes, whether against natural or revealed religion; require as publick, general judgments to preserve a sense of, and regard for either. And notwithstanding God has appointed another day, wherein he will fully and finally judge the world, and that day may be sufficient to do right to each individual; yet is the case very different with mankind considered in their social state, under a public or a national character; which equally deserves regard, and more immediately demands a treatment suitable to their respective situations, in order to maintain the dignity, or even support the existence of divine worship under some stated forms; or to keep up the face of public virtue, decency and honour. And accordingly we find in all ages that whensoever in either of these respects a nation is grown openly flagitious, and has "filled up the measure of its iniquity," then does God as openly pour down the "vials of his wrath" upon that people; in which
sense

sense he is also said to “visit the sins of the fathers on their “children”. [which likewise is the case more or less in each well constituted human government] though in the other, in their own private, personal capacity, every one assuredly shall “bear his own burden”.

That such in fact has been the constant method of Divine Providence will appear more fully under the next head, where we are to establish the same point from scripture.

The history of the Old Testament is properly a history of divine providence, and itself a most signal instance of it. It contains so many remarkable evidences of a special interposition in the government of one peculiar people (who yet do not appear in themselves to have any thing very extraordinary above all other people) as seems to set these up for signs and examples to the rest of mankind, in order to direct them how to receive and interpret all occurrences; namely, as coming from the same hand, though not in so very open, visible a manner. There we find the Jews constantly enjoying prosperity, health, peace and plenty, just as the true religion flourished amongst them; and as constantly visited with afflictions, with the pestilence, or famine, or the sword, whenever they relapsed into idolatry.

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There we meet with various testimonies of the fervent prayer of even one eminently righteous man availing to derive either extraordinary mercies, or immediate judgments from heaven on the whole nation. Such as *Elias*, *Asa*, *Jehosaphet*, *Hezekiah*, *Daniel*, and the like. Again, every prophecy, with its completion recorded in the Old Testament, is a proof both of God's foreseeing and directing the thoughts and acts of men. Relating things to come many ages after, which depended on the determination of free agents; and predictions of their crimes and vices, to which they could be no otherwise determined than by their own free choice, these are of such a nature that they can have none but God omniscient for their author. Beside the many clear prophecies recorded of the *Messiah*, who was foretold from the beginning of the world, and at length the several circumstances of his birth, life, death and resurrection most exactly described; beside the numerous predictions concerning the forementioned *Israelites*, every period of whose history was very particularly related long before; we find that God has also spoken by the same prophets, "at fundry times and in divers manners," concerning most other kingdoms of the earth. Thus after the destruction of the whole earth had been foretold by
Noah,

Noah, he declares the future condition of his three sons who were to re-people it. Thus did *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob* delineate the fortunes of their latest descendants, Jew and Gentile. Thus *Balaam*, himself a Heathen, by a divine impulse, foretels the fate of the four Heathen nations, the *Moabites*, the *Edomites*, the *Kenites*, and the *Amalekites*, as well as the conquests of the *Macedonians* and *Affyrians*: and thus do the succeeding prophets predict either the destruction of the several chief cities round them, as of *Babylon*, *Tyre*, *Sidon*; or the more distant rise and glory of some future monarchy, such as *Nebuchadnezzar* and *Darius*, *Alexander* and *Cyrus*; the last of whom was expressly named with the title of God's *anointed*, in a prophecy above two hundred years before its accomplishment, and all of them described in a series perfectly historical by our prophet *Daniel*. Thus, together with him, all the prophets bear witness to the existence and continual exercise of the divine *wisdom* and *might*, and by their very office proclaim that "the eyes of the Lord are over all his works" "and that his dominion reaches unto the ends of the earth".

From the same history we learn, that things which seem to depend upon the most irregular causes, are yet under

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the same order and direction. Innumerable instances occur, where seeming accidents, and in all human appearance very trivial ones, have under the divine conduct given birth to the most considerable events. By how many such seeming contingencies was *Joseph* advanced to a place in *Pharaoh's* throne, for the preservation of his own people? and *Moses* raised up to bring them back again out of *Egypt*, and *David* preserved to rule over them, and *Esther* presented to king *Ahasuerus* to deliver them from destruction?

But since the objection is chiefly levell'd against such interpositions under the *Christian* dispensation, let us add a few of those proofs that occur in the New Testament, which are equally full and clear in each particular. Thus is God's omniscience declared*, "known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world," and apply'd to that great mystery, the call of the *Gentiles*, which both in its prediction and accomplishment is here also said to be the doing of God †. The sufferings and death of *Christ* were brought about more immediately by the treachery of *Judas* and the malice of the *Jews*, yet is he said to be]

* x Acts xv. 18.

† V. 17.

delivered up to them “ by the determined council
“ and foreknowledge of God”*.

The appointment of one to succeed *Judas* in the apostle-
ship is made by casting of *lots*, and yet the same all-
knowing God is appealed to in it, and the whole own'd
to be his own *choice*†.

And as the greatest events are not above his guidance,
so neither are the least, most inconsiderable, things below
his notice. The herbs and flowers of the field, the fowls
of the air, the very hairs of our head, are number'd. We
are frequently assured, that all things, causes, circum-
stances, are in the hand of a most faithful Creator, and will
by him be so directed as to work together for good to
them that love him ; — and therefore we are, in the last
place also commanded to believe, hope, and put our trust
in him, and in him only ; to offer up our constant, warm
devotions to him for whatever we expect, or now enjoy ;
to be *careful*, or anxiously solicitous, *for nothing*, but “ in

* Acts ii. 23. iv. 28. † Acts i. 24.

“ every

“ every thing by prayers and supplications, with thanksgiving, to let our requests be made known unto God.”*

Thus perfectly do the two revelations agree together, and confirm each other, in proclaiming this great truth, which reason had before suggested, namely, that God’s immediate superintendency and most particular providence is continually exercised over all his works; that he “ appointeth the ordinances of heaven and earth, “ and doth according to his will” in each of them; that all “ the powers that be” are, in this sense, “ ordained of “ God,” who is “ the blessed and only” supreme “ potentate, “ the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords”.

To cite particular passages in confirmation of the same doctrine would be endless.

I shall therefore proceed, in the last place, to apply it to the sad occasion of this day’s solemnity.

If then there be a particular providence ordering the affairs of this world, then surely we should look a little

* Phil. iv. 6.

beyond

beyond second causes, and lift up our eyes to the original disposer of them; we should with all humility enquire what he may chiefly intend by each remarkable event, and what he would have us learn in the commemoration of it.

We ought in a particular manner to reflect upon those crying sins which usually call down his heavy judgments on a land; such more especially as once attended on this day; the history whereof is too well known to need explaining in this place. Nor are we less acquainted with the causes that immediately produced them among the bulk of the people, at and some time before this fatal period: namely, an eager impatience of restraint and discipline, a restless spirit of disobedience to all order, law and government; a resolution to suspect and censure, to calumniate and expose every action and intention of all persons placed in superior stations. And I heartily wish it were less obvious to remark, that these same causes still subsist among us, and in so high a degree, as may be justly apprehended to draw down the like, or greater vengeance on our heads. So far are we from having profited by former examples, that we have the very same principles and practices revived in church and state, which upon this day completed the

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destruction of them both ; on one hand appears the same, or rather a more flagrant and avow'd contempt of every thing that is serious and should be held sacred ; on another, the very same wild enthusiastic notions in religion are prevailing ; the same violent measures are pursued, and unsound maxims of civil policy too frequently advanced on every hand. One cannot but observe the same notorious, or even a yet more undisguised insult upon Majesty, and open ridicule of every ordinance divine or human ; — that superior growth of Atheism and profaneness ; — those bold attacks on the foundation and first principles of piety and virtue ; — that enormous height of luxury, and lewdness and corruption ; — that almost universal dissipation, and abandon'd dissoluteness, which it is difficult to parallel in history.

When crimes like these become extensive and predominant, 'tis easy to foretel where they must end. When by such ways any nation renders itself ripe for destruction, then does Divine Providence, concurring with and aiding natural causes, proceed to inflict the judgment such a nation has deserved, by raising up some foreign enemies to insult and invade it ; or by permitting its own
unnatural

unnatural sons to weaken and distract it; or by both these together, which indeed usually excite and inflame each other, completing its decay, and hastening its dissolution.

What reason we have from appearances to expect that this may shortly be our case, unless prevented by a thorough reformation, happy would it be for us were we wise enough to understand, and well enough disposed to consider:—to discern the “ signs of the times,” and take due warning by what befell our forefathers, that the like iniquity may not prove our ruin;—to propitiate Heaven for our own sins, and those of the nation in general, by sincere, solemn acts of devotion to the supreme Ruler of heaven and earth;—by a just deference, and willing obedience to those in authority under him;—by chearfully co-operating with them in the exertion of all that influence with which he has entrusted us;—by faithfully and steadily applying every lawful means for our deliverance.

This is to answer the true end of such Solemnities: when we trace each past evil back to its source, in order, not to repeat the like, by reviving those very feuds and animosities

animosities which once occasion'd it;—not to reflect either on those private families, or sects and parties which in their turns contributed to it: but rather unite in our endeavours to remove some part of those calamities to which all of us stand expos'd:—to heal the wounds in our constitution, and cast out that evil spirit of contention and division under which it has so frequently suffered, and must always suffer;—desirous to alleviate the cares of government by a candid interpretation of the motives of our governors, joined to a free examination of their measures;—studious to lighten somewhat of the common load, instead of striving to increase its weight, or undermine the powers that should support it;—zealous to strengthen the hands of our most gracious Sovereign, that through the Divine assistance, which we ardently implore, he may be enabled to save and defend us, no less from outward dangers and distresses, than from such as are daily springing up among ourselves.

Thus shall we make the due improvement of this important doctrine, a *particular Providence*, and reap the benefits arising from a worthy contemplation of it. We shall take the most effectual way of entitling ourselves to
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the Almighty's more immediate protection, and at length prevail to the withdrawing these his fore judgments which seem now hanging over us, and which we have already felt in some degree.

Then may we hope, that the same ever wise and gracious Governor of the world will vouchsafe to remove them, and other like evils, from this his often highly favoured Church and Nation, — restore the blessings of peace, health, and happiness, both spiritual and temporal; and finally establish and perpetuate them to us and our posterity.

